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New York

Chairman: Mr. Mernier ..... (Belgium)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda items 63 to 80 (*continued*)

Thematic discussion on item subjects; introduction and consideration of all draft resolutions submitted under all items

Mr. Tejeira (Panama) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The delegation of Panama, on behalf of the countries of the Rio Group, has the honour to speak under the item on transparency in armaments. Confidence- and security-building measures, and transparency in armaments in particular, are especially useful in guaranteeing diplomacy to ensure international peace and security. The United Nations and regional organizations must play an important role in the area of international arms transfers and in the elimination of the illicit trafficking of arms. However, the cooperation of the international community is indispensable if we are to be successful in our work.

States must work together to control armaments and promote confidence with a view to preventing and reducing the excessive and destabilizing accumulation of armaments. The adoption of concrete measures to promote transparency makes a crucial contribution to the collective security system of the San Francisco Charter.

Participation in the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms should be expanded and consolidated over time, as it is an effective tool for promoting peace. We appeal to all States, if they have not yet done so, to cooperate with the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms.

The heads of State or Government of the member States of the Rio Group met in Panama on 4 and 5 September 1998 and stated their conviction that the implementation of confidence-and security-building measures in the hemisphere would gradually promote cooperation in the transparency of defence policies and, from a contemporary and comprehensive perspective, would help strengthen the institutions and instruments that make up the hemispheric security system.

They reiterated their aim of moving gradually towards effective limitation of conventional weapons in the region in order to devote more resources to the economic and social development of our peoples.

They also affirmed their support for the initiative to convene the Rio Group's Ad Hoc Working Group on conventional weapons limitation with a view to adopting a recommendation at the thirteenth summit.

In this context, we welcome the political declaration of the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR), Bolivia and Chile as a zone of peace, signed at the fourteenth summit of Presidents, held at Ushuaia on 24 July 1998, in which the Presidents, among other commitments, agreed to proclaim the MERCOSUR area, Bolivia and Chile a zone of peace free from weapons of mass destruction; agreed to advance towards declaring the zone free from anti-personnel landmines and to try to extend this zone to cover the entire western hemisphere; and reiterated their commitment to expand and systematize information from the Register of Conventional Arms and to devise standardized methodology for information on military expenditure with a view to increasing transparency and promoting confidence.

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At the regional level, the recent adoption of the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives and Other Related Materials is very important for the American continent. It contributes to establishing links and increasing opportunities for cooperation among the countries in the region, to the benefit of our joint efforts against factors that imperil the security of individuals and States. The Convention corresponds to the aim of the Organization of American States (OAS) to effectively limit conventional arms and thus allow more resources to be devoted to economic and social development.

We have seen that the alarming incidence of illicit traffic in arms is having a negative impact on transparency in this area. Increased transparency and concrete measures, such as those adopted in the context of American States, can serve as a basis for the United Nations to set up machinery that has a global aim.

Mr. Majoor (Netherlands): First, I should like to express our pleasure and gratitude at seeing you, Sir, in the Chair of the Committee. You can be assured of the full support of my delegation in your work.

My delegation takes the floor to speak on transparency in armaments, and more particularly on draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.43. This is not the first time that my delegation has spoken on transparency in armaments. We have done so for many years in the First Committee in the run-up to and the follow-up of the establishment of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. We have also done so, in a wider context, in the Conference on Disarmament, which we still find to be the appropriate forum to discuss transparency in all its aspects. There we have the necessary expertise to deal with the issue in a substantive and comprehensive manner.

It is for that reason that we favour, as the Committee will undoubtedly be aware, the establishment of an ad hoc committee on transparency in armaments in the Conference on Disarmament. That committee would have a deliberative mandate in order to allow for an open — I am tempted to say "transparent" — and in-depth discussion of all the aspects involved and to study the wealth of proposals and ideas which are so ably compiled in the document recently produced by the Conference on Disarmament secretariat in Geneva. I trust that the Conference on Disarmament will be more than willing to enter into substantive work on this matter next year.

In this brief intervention I should like to concentrate on three aspects of transparency. First, I should like to dwell on some of the essential characteristics of transparency measures, and more generally of confidence-building measures, since I believe that there continue to exist misunderstandings about the very nature of confidence-building and of the United Nations Register.

Secondly, I should like to put the issue of transparency in a slightly broader context than our draft resolution in the First Committee. It is not only through this draft resolution that transparency in armaments can or should be promoted. There are other instances and forums where aspects of transparency in the right context are also being discussed and negotiated.

Thirdly, I should like to give some explanation about the content of the draft resolution and particularly to clarify the statement in the draft resolution about the continuing operation of the Register and its further development.

An essential characteristic of confidence-building measures is that they work only if they are agreed upon freely by all concerned in the interests of peace and security for all. This notion is implied by the very nature of confidence-building and the way it is approached in the United Nations. Confidence needs two sides, which means that confidence-building measures will not lend themselves to the imposition of particular measures on any country. Attempts in that direction show a lack of understanding of what confidence-building is all about. The United Nations Register is therefore a voluntary measure to which we continue to believe that all countries should voluntarily provide the requested data and information.

Another feature of confidence-building measures is that they can be agreed upon at the global level. These are measures of a general nature that are expected to contribute to global security, often as an integral part of our continuous endeavour towards global disarmament and arms control. These global efforts should, however, allow for, and more importantly should encourage and be complemented by, regional and subregional measures and approaches that are tailored to the security situation and security needs of the countries and regions involved.

The last point I should like to make on the general features of confidence-building, and the role of transparency therein, is obvious but apparently not generally recognized. It is the observation that confidence-building measures, and transparency measures for that matter, by themselves do not and cannot solve regional

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problems or conflicts. Confidence-building is only a small but necessary part of increased security at both the regional level and the global level.

On my second subject, the broader context of transparency, I should simply like to state that the draft resolution we are introducing today should not be seen as the only instrument in which transparency should be addressed. It is not an omnibus draft resolution on transparency, and the co-sponsors do not have the intention of turning it into one. Our draft resolution focuses, in a consensual manner, on the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and its further development. The United Nations standardized reporting system on military expenditures is also a transparency measure, and transparency is a central point in the discussions on small arms. These issues are addressed in other draft resolutions in the Committee.

We are fully aware that transparency is also an important element of discussions and negotiations relating to weapons of mass destruction, not as a confidence-building measure but as an element in compliance regimes or safeguards systems. Transparency is an important element of the Chemical Weapons Convention verification regime. In the framework of the Biological Weapons Convention, hard work is under way on an effective compliance regime that should provide us with the necessary means to verify in a transparent manner that no biological weapons are developed, produced, stockpiled or used.

Finally, on the nuclear side, verification arrangements do exist or are being negotiated through safeguards arrangements with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in the framework of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and, hopefully, in the near future also as part of a treaty on the prohibition of the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

Although some delegations may find that these instruments do not work entirely to their satisfaction, or are not universally adhered to, we believe that these concerns should first be addressed in the context of the above-mentioned instruments. The United Nations expert panel and the Conference on Disarmament also seem to be appropriate forums to discuss certain aspects of the issue. The draft resolution therefore makes a reference to weapons of mass destruction, on the basis of which delegations are invited to express their views on the subject to the Secretary-General.

It is our view, however, that the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms itself should not be burdened with these subjects. Trying to expand the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms to weapons of mass destruction might jeopardize the functioning of this successful United Nations instrument.

As to my third and last point, the content of the present draft resolution, I should like to underline that the draft resolution has not been changed from last year's apart from some updating. The draft resolution recalls its request to Member States to provide the Secretary-General with their views on the continuing operation of the Register and its further development and also on transparency measures related to weapons of mass destruction.

The draft resolution further reiterates the request to the Secretary-General to prepare a report to the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly on the continuing operation of the Register and its further development, with the assistance of a group of governmental experts to be convened in the year 2000. The report should of course take into account the work of the Conference on Disarmament, the views expressed by Member States and the earlier reports of the Secretary-General on the issue. My delegation believes that by proceeding in this careful manner we have the best chance of developing the Register in a consensual and productive manner.

At this stage I should not like to prejudice the advice of the expert panel, which still has to start its work. Nor do we want to pre-empt in any way the recommendations that the report of the Secretary-General to the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly might contain.

I should like to thank the 85 countries that have so far co-sponsored draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.43. Such wide support from countries of all regions gives a political signal that countries wish to promote the functioning and the further development of the Register. The participation in the Register is gradually increasing. This year, for the first time, the report includes additional information provided by Governments on procurement from national production and military holdings. These positive developments, however, do not mean that we should become complacent. The Register needs to be strengthened further and its participation increased.

My delegation, and I believe I speak also on behalf of the many co-sponsors, hopes that the draft resolution will receive at least the same wide support as did last year's. It

remains our hope that we will move back, sooner rather than later, to one consensus draft resolution on this subject.

Mr. Seibert (Germany): Since this is the first time I have spoken here at this session, I should like to express my deep satisfaction at seeing you, Mr. Chairman, at the helm of the First Committee. Please be assured of the full cooperation and support of my delegation in the discharge of your duties.

I have the honour to introduce, on behalf of 42 co-sponsors, draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.30 entitled "Objective information on military matters, including transparency of military expenditures". I take this opportunity to thank all co-sponsors of this draft resolution. Their growing number is encouraging and will hopefully translate into broader participation in the annual reporting.

The draft resolution before us has been developed in a joint effort by the delegations of Romania and Germany. I should like to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation to the delegation of Romania for its close and effective cooperation, which has become a good tradition. That tradition dates back to 1980, when the two countries still belonged to two different political and military alliances confronting each other. In this context, allow me to make a few more general remarks on the concept of confidence-building and transparency before addressing the content of the draft resolution.

Germany has acquired unique experience with confidence-building measures, including transparency, under most difficult security conditions. Up to 1990 Germany was divided, and the line of political and military confrontation ran through the heart of my country. It was in this very situation of deep-rooted antagonism that we started to promote and implement confidence-building measures in a cooperative manner. Romania and Germany actively contributed to the development of confidence-building measures and, in a joint effort to bridge the confrontation, promoted, *inter alia*, the idea of global transparency of military expenditures.

The historic improvement of international relations in Europe and on a global scale was associated with increasing openness, including transparency in military matters. Objective information on military policies, armaments, and armed forces activities contributed significantly to confidence-building among States, which was a crucial precondition for ending the cold war. It also paved the way for the conclusion of concrete disarmament agreements, such as that on the reduction, by half, of major weapon categories in Europe. This in turn was closely related to solving the political problems in the centre of Europe, which, *inter alia*, brought the German people reunification and self-determination. In view of this historical experience, Germany is deeply convinced that a better flow of objective information on military matters can significantly contribute to confidence-building among States and thus help create an international atmosphere in which security can be strengthened.

Despite this positive historical experience, critical questions have been put to us during the deliberations on this item in several forums, including in the course of consultations in this body. I am fully aware that transparency is not an end in itself and cannot be a substitute for removing the root causes of tension or for concrete, verifiable, balanced and non-discriminatory arms control and disarmament agreements.

However, how can States remove the political root causes of tension and conflict in a climate of distrust and suspicion? Keeping secret basic information on the quantity and nature of armament and military activities raises the level of suspicion between States, provokes arms races and thus further increases tension.

In response to the national security concerns voiced by some delegations, let me stress that transparency does not mean disclosing all military information in detail without any restrictions, nor is transparency meant as a substitute for intelligence and information-gathering for military planning purposes. Quite the contrary: transparency means laying open national military policies in general; quantitative and — to some extent also — qualitative levels of critical armaments; and armed forces activities, in order to reduce the misunderstanding of each other's intentions and to avoid a miscalculation of such activities. That is, the concept of transparency is related to that of openness. Signalling political willingness to shape international security in a cooperative manner seems to be the most important contribution of transparency in military matters to confidence-building. It shows preparedness to engage in a dialogue which allows for asking questions and giving appropriate clarifications on military capabilities and policies, as well as intentions associated with them.

While most concepts on transparency in military matters have been developed and implemented in a regional context, on a global scale the international community has moved forward slowly and has made only modest progress so far. Two global transparency measures have been adopted by United Nations Member States: the United

Nations Register of Conventional Arms and the United Nations standardized reporting system on military expenditures. While the Register reflects national data on arms exports and imports within seven specified categories of conventional weapons, the standardized reporting system on military expenditures gives a more general overview of national defence policies, in particular with respect to national spending on procurement, operating costs and research and development. My delegation wishes to underline the importance of universal adherence to both instruments and appeals to all Member States to provide reports annually to the Secretary-General.

Let me also take this opportunity to thank the delegation of the Netherlands for submitting a draft resolution on transparency in armaments, contained in document A/C.1/53/L.39, which particularly deals with the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. Germany has co-sponsored that draft resolution and would welcome its broad support by Member States.

Let me now turn to the draft resolution before us. The United Nations system for the standardized reporting of military expenditures is a significant contribution to international confidence-building in the field of military matters. We are aware, however, that the full potential of confidence-building can be developed only in conjunction with further substantial political steps. The establishment of such an international political framework requires the steady, persistent and sometimes painstaking step-by-step effort of the international community.

The United Nations system for the standardized reporting of military expenditures is an important contribution to this objective. It fully takes into account the different political conditions in each region. It has been acknowledged by all Member States several times through the repeated adoption without a vote of previous resolutions under the same title.

These resolutions are recalled in the first and second preambular paragraphs of the draft resolution before us. In the third and sixth preambular paragraphs the draft resolution notes and welcomes the decision by many Member States to participate in the annual reporting. Regrettably, however, the participation continues to be disappointing.

It is for this reason that last year's resolution 52/32 called upon Member States to provide the Secretary-General with their views on ways and means to strengthen and broaden participation in the reporting system, including necessary changes to its content and structure. It also requested the Secretary-General to resume consultations with the relevant international bodies with a view to increased participation and to submit a report to the General Assembly on the outcome of these consultations, including appropriate recommendations.

The draft resolution before us takes up this request put forward by the General Assembly at its fifty-second session and refers to the Secretary-General's report (A/53/218) and the recommendations contained therein.

In operative paragraphs 2 and 3 the draft resolution welcomes the resumption of consultations by the Secretary-General with relevant international bodies and expresses its appreciation for the submission of the aforementioned Secretary-General's report, which contains, *inter alia*, practical recommendations on ways and means to enhance participation in the standardized reporting system. It is these recommendations that operative paragraphs 4, 5, 6 and 7 seek to implement.

Operative paragraph 4 not only repeats the traditional call upon Member States to report annually their military expenditures for the latest fiscal year for which data is available, it also gives more flexibility as to the reporting format, taking into account that many States report their military expenditures regularly to other international bodies or regional organizations.

To facilitate reporting, operative paragraph 4 therefore suggests that Member States might also use as appropriate other formats developed in conjunction with similar reporting in other international or regional contexts.

Operative paragraph 5 in turn encourages relevant international bodies and regional organizations to promote transparency of military expenditures and to enhance complementarity among reporting systems, while recognizing the different conditions prevailing in every single region.

Operative paragraph 6 requests the Secretary-General to assist Member States in the annual reporting by administrative measures which are also used with regard to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, such as sending an annual note verbale along with appropriate technical instructions and in promoting international and regional symposiums and training seminars.

Operative paragraph 7 requests the Secretary-General to continue consultations with relevant international bodies

with a view to ascertaining the requirements for adjusting the present instrument to encourage wider participation. The emphasis is on examining possibilities to enhance complementarity among different reporting systems and to exchange related information.

Operative paragraph 8 requests the Secretary-General to submit the report to the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly with further recommendations based on the outcome of these consultations and taking into account the views of Member States. Since this approach depends to a large extent on the cooperation of Member States, operative paragraph 9 again calls upon all Member States to provide the Secretary-General with their views on ways and means to strengthen and broaden participation, including necessary changes of the content and structure of the reporting system.

It must be our common goal to prevent this valuable instrument of confidence-building, which has always been unanimously agreed upon by the community of Member States, from being undermined through neglect and, thereby, also to protect the credibility of General Assembly resolutions.

Therefore, the operative part of the draft resolution stresses the need for action and makes concrete suggestions.

Let me finally express our sincere hope that the community of Member States will be able to adopt this draft resolution by consensus, as it did in the case of similar resolutions in previous years.

Mr. Niculescu (Romania) (*interpretation from French*): I should like to join all those who have expressed their satisfaction at seeing you, Mr. Chairman, presiding over this important Committee of the General Assembly, and I assure you that the Romanian delegation will support you and help you wholeheartedly in the work of the Committee.

(*spoke in English*)

I asked to speak in order to present some of our national views on draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.30, entitled "Objective information on military matters, including transparency of military expenditures", which has just been so ably introduced by the representative of Germany, Ambassador Gunther Seibert, to whom we express our deep gratitude.

As a traditional co-sponsor of the draft resolution on this subject, Romania attaches great importance to this issue and believes that increasing transparency in the military field leads to greater confidence among States, in particular those belonging to the same region. Recent experience in different regions, including the Central and Eastern European one, has underlined once again that confidence remains essential to, and is an important requirement for, the maintenance of regional and international peace and stability. Strengthening confidence-building activities through a better flow of objective military information could indeed help relieve regional and international tensions and prevent misunderstandings and miscalculations that might lead to irreversible military confrontations.

My country reaffirms its firm conviction that the United Nations standardized reporting system is still valid and its implementation would be a step in reducing tensions regionally and worldwide. Increased transparency in the area of military budgets and openness in military affairs will enhance confidence among States, thereby providing an opportunity to reduce the risk of military confrontation.

Regrettably, however, participation in the United Nations reporting system in previous years was less than expected. Romania shares the concern expressed by various other delegations at such low participation. That is why we attach great importance to the call, contained in operative paragraph 4 of the draft resolution, upon all Member States of the United Nations to report annually, by 30 April, to the Secretary-General their military expenditure for the latest fiscal year for which data are available.

In this context, Romania welcomes the resumption of consultations initiated by the Secretary-General aimed at ascertaining the requirements for adjusting the present reporting instrument with a view to enhancing the participation of Member States. We are grateful for the report submitted by the Secretary-General following these consultations, document A/53/218, and to the recommendations contained therein. We hope for a positive outcome of this process leading to the wider involvement of Member States and a strengthening of the standardized reporting system.

At the same time, my country is encouraged by the decision of the Conference on Disarmament to reappoint a special coordinator on transparency in armaments. We believe that the consultations to be undertaken could also address the issue of the transparency of military expenditures.

Finally, I should like to thank the German delegation for its excellent cooperation in this matter and all co-sponsors of the draft resolution for their support. My delegation joins Ambassador Seibert's appeal for the draft resolution to be adopted by consensus, as has been the case with similar resolutions in previous years.

Ms. Arce de Jeannet (Mexico) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The delegation of Mexico has the honour to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.18, entitled "United Nations Disarmament Information Programme", co-sponsored by the delegations of Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Indonesia, Kenya, Malaysia, Monaco, Nicaragua, Peru, South Africa and Mexico. This initiative is in keeping with Mexico's traditional support for United Nations disarmament activities.

The fourth preambular paragraph of A/C.1/53/L.18 states that the re-establishment of the Department for Disarmament Affairs should lead to reinvigorating the United Nations information and outreach activities in the field of disarmament. The last preambular paragraph, and subparagraph (a) of operative paragraph 5, emphasize the expansion of electronic means, without abandoning traditional means of disseminating information.

We have welcomed the affirmation in the Secretary-General's report contained in document A/53/161 that in the next two years the Department for Disarmament Affairs will respond to the need to make better use of electronic means, greater emphasis will be laid on preparing products for the general public and cooperation will be stepped up with the Department of Public Information, as well as with other departments and bodies outside the United Nations system, which we understand to include academic institutions.

Operative paragraph 6 of draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.18 emphasizes the importance of contributions to the Voluntary Trust Fund for the United Nations Disarmament Information Programme in order to sustain a strong outreach programme, and invites all Member States to make contributions to the Fund. We would like to thank the 15 States that made voluntary contributions to the Trust Fund between July 1996 and July 1998, as indicated in the Secretary-General's report. However, we think that Member States should show a higher level of commitment, since the benefits of the Information Programme, including the timely publication of the United Nations Disarmament Yearbook, are obvious.

We hope that draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.18 will be adopted by consensus, as were similar resolutions in previous years.

Mr. Elaraby (Egypt): Allow me at the outset to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, on your election to preside over the deliberations of the First Committee during this session and to congratulate also the members of the Bureau, particularly my colleague the Rapporteur.

I have the pleasure today of introducing draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.3* entitled "Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East". Such a draft resolution, as I am sure everyone is aware, has been annually adopted by the General Assembly since 1974 and adopted by consensus since 1980.

The consensus that has emerged in the General Assembly over the years with respect to this proposal and the steadfast support it has received in bilateral declarations and in various multilateral forums is no doubt clear testimony to the relevance and the viability of the concept of establishing such a zone in the Middle East.

The establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East would greatly contribute to arresting the proliferation of the threat from nuclear weapons. It would strengthen the security of all States of the region and, consequently, would be deemed to be an important confidence-building measure towards the achievement of a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East.

During the forty-fifth session of the General Assembly a study on effective and verifiable measures to facilitate the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East was commissioned by the Secretary-General as the result of a General Assembly resolution, and was presented for consideration in this Committee. The study was well received and was considered to be a useful and balanced approach to attain an important objective. In its conclusion, it is stated,

> "There ... is no doubt that the goal can be reached; it is not an idle dream." *(A/45/435, para. 175)*

It goes on to state,

> "The effort required will be great, but so will the benefits of success." [*ibid., para. 176)*

For more than 17 years now the Middle East nuclear-weapon-free zone has been unanimously anticipated, a

record which testifies to the overwhelming support of this objective. However, we must face the plain truth that the objective is eluding us. No concrete measures or operational measures have been taken, and no serious talks have yet been held, formally or informally, among regional parties with a view to putting into practice what all of us here seem to aspire to and preach. The reason for such failure lies squarely with Israel, the only State in the Middle East that is not a party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Yet, and despite the general frustration over the stagnation which characterizes the Middle East nuclear-weapon-free-zone efforts, Egypt firmly supports the implementation of the resolution this body annually adopts.

But our endorsement of this draft resolution must not be construed or misinterpreted as tacit acquiescence. On the contrary, Egypt continues to be committed to the earliest establishment and implementation of the principles and provisions of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, and indeed, of a zone free from all weapons of mass destruction.

In a region fraught with tension, such as the Middle East the zone cannot be looked on as, *a posteriori*, a peace dividend, but as an essential confidence-building measure facilitating and leading the way towards a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East.

Though we fully realize that peace, security and stability in the region will be achieved only when a comprehensive peace is attained, it is essential to create the necessary climate and conditions that facilitate the achievement of this objective. In our view, the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone would contribute substantially in this regard.

It is our considered opinion that the time is now ripe to proceed towards the establishment of this zone. For this reason, operative paragraph 10 of the draft resolution endeavours once again to utilize the good offices of the Secretary-General to inject the required impetus into the process. It seems timely today that we seriously embark upon laying the solid foundations on which to proceed.

In this regard, the same operative paragraph requests the Secretary-General to pursue his consultations with the States of the region and other concerned parties.

I also invite attention to the eighth preambular paragraph and operative paragraph 9, in which reference is made to the establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. This initiative aims at broadening the scope of the 1974 initiative by adding to it chemical as well as biological weapons. It should be recalled that since the announcement of this initiative by President Mubarak on 9 April 1990 — which was later encompassed by his broader initiative in June 1998 to convene an international conference to free the world from all weapons of mass destruction — the 1990 initiative has been attracting an ever-growing degree of support. The Security Council, for example, on 3 April 1991 adopted resolution 687 (1991), paragraph 14 of which stipulates that there is a need to work towards the establishment in the Middle East of a zone free from all weapons of mass destruction.

Finally, I commend this draft resolution to the First Committee and hope that it will receive the same support given to similar resolutions in previous years and will be adopted, as previously, without a vote.

Mr. Valle (Brazil) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the countries of the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR) — Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay — as well as Bolivia and Chile, on agenda item 71 (d), entitled "Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction". MERCOSUR is proud to be the first association of countries to have supported unanimously the signing of this Convention in Ottawa, fully aware of the commitment we were taking on to eradicate this kind of weapon that has done and continues to do so much damage.

Unfortunately, minefields containing millions of landmines are scattered through almost all regions of the world, and demining is one of the great challenges before us in the post-conflict construction of societies. Landmines are an obstacle to the economic viability of affected areas, entail tremendous human cost and have an impact on the civilian population long after a conflict has ended. In various regions, landmines imperil peacekeeping missions. United Nations peacekeeping personnel from the MERCOSUR countries have had to face the dangers inherent in these weapons, and some have even lost their lives in various parts of the world. The most regrettable thing is that women and children are killed or maimed by these hidden, indiscriminate weapons that respect no truce or ceasefire. The devastation wrought by these slow-motion weapons of mass destruction is highlighted in the study on the impact of armed conflict on children.

The Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, adopted last year in Oslo in the framework of the Ottawa process, expresses the consensus will of the international community to totally eliminate these weapons that violate international humanitarian law. Cooperation in mine clearance and assistance to victims also received special attention in the Ottawa negotiations. The Convention thus covers the essential aspects for alleviating the suffering of peoples and paving the way for their development. In that context, it is highly significant that our region intends to become the first region in the world to declare itself free of this scourge. This objective was established in the 1996 and 1997 Organization of American States (OAS) resolutions on declaring the western hemisphere a zone free of anti-personnel landmines. Actions have also been undertaken at the highest level by the Rio Group.

At the subregional level, in the 24 July 1998 political declaration of MERCOSUR, Bolivia and Chile as a zone of peace, our Presidents agreed to advance towards establishing the region as a zone free of anti-personnel landmines.

For several years now the United Nations has been clearly focusing on this subject, as can be seen in the Security Council deliberations on mine clearance in the context of peacekeeping operations. MERCOSUR, through Uruguay, has taken part in the creation and operation of the United Nations Central Mine Action Office and the Central Mine Action Training School.

We welcome the Government of Mozambique's important initiative of offering Maputo as the site of the first meeting of the States parties to the Ottawa Convention, as well as the Convention's entry into force on 1 March 1999. The MERCOSUR countries support and will do their utmost to contribute to the ministerial meeting in Maputo scheduled for 3 May.

Mr. Earle (United States of America): It is a pleasure to return once again to the First Committee, and it is a particular pleasure to see you, Sir, in the Chair.

On behalf of the Russian Federation, the United States and the other three sponsors named in the draft resolution — Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine — as well as the additional sponsors, I am pleased to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.49, entitled "Bilateral nuclear arms negotiations and nuclear disarmament".

This draft resolution places on record the significant progress made in reducing the strategic nuclear weapons arsenals of the Russian Federation and of the United States. The signs of progress since last year's resolution on this subject include the initiative signed in September between Presidents Clinton and Yeltsin, in which the two Presidents agreed to exchange information on the ballistic missiles and space launch vehicles derived from each side's missile launch warning system. This initiative includes the possible establishment of a centre for the exchange of missile launch data operated by Russia and the United States and separate from their respective national centres. The Presidents also agreed to examine bilaterally the possibility of establishing a multilateral ballistic missile and space launch vehicle pre-launch notification regime in which other States could voluntarily participate.

Draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.49 also welcomes the pledge made in September by the Russian Federation and the United States to remove by stages approximately 50 metric tons of plutonium from each of their nuclear weapons programmes and to convert this material so that it can never be used in nuclear weapons.

The draft resolution recognizes that much work remains to be done in this field, urges the United States and Russia to begin negotiations on a START III agreement immediately after START II enters into force and encourages them to continue their efforts to reduce their nuclear weapons and to give those efforts the highest priority.

It also welcomes the reductions made by other nuclear-weapon States and encourages them to consider appropriate measures relating to nuclear disarmament. In this way the draft resolution provides further impetus to the nuclear-weapon States to continue meeting their obligations under article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

Draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.49 contains a record not of resolutions adopted or studies agreed but of substantial progress in nuclear disarmament. To wit, through the Treaty on the Elimination of Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles (INF) we have abolished an entire class of nuclear delivery systems. The implementation of START I has led to rapid and major reductions of strategic offensive weapons, and the entry into force of START II, and then START III, will reduce Russian and American strategic weapons to still lower levels.

Russia and the United States take pride in this record of accomplishment. The bilateral negotiating forum has shown that it works and works effectively. This approach has taken us to the eve of even more drastic reductions — up to 80 per cent of the cold-war total of our respective arms. The drafters of the draft resolution, however, do not believe that satisfaction has led to complacency. The Russian Federation and the United States have set themselves ambitious goals for the future. If they are implemented in START III, another significant step will be taken towards the ultimate goal of eliminating nuclear weapons.

We all have a vital interest in nuclear disarmament. Draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.49 recognizes that interest and encourages it in a very practical way. It deserves the support of all members of the international community, and on behalf of the Russian Federation and the United States I ask for the widest support in this body.

Mr. Yamaguchi (Japan): With your permission, Mr. Chairman, I should like to make an announcement. The list of sponsors of draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.42, entitled "Nuclear disarmament with a view to the ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons", is now open for signature. Delegations wishing to be sponsors of that draft resolution are kindly requested to go to the Secretariat to sign up.

Mr. Moher (Canada): Since this is the first time I have spoken this year in the First Committee, may I emphasize that it is both a pleasure and an honour to participate under your chairmanship, Sir. Canada will do its best to make your chairmanship as productive as possible.

I should like to speak to two topics, one very briefly and the other almost as briefly. The first concerns draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.33, dealing with the landmines Convention. I should like to recall the statement made by Mozambique in the Committee on 26 April welcoming the process that has begun to implement the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. In that regard, we are pleased to confirm that draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.33, which now has, I believe, at least 118 sponsors, is formally before the Committee for action.

Turning to the second topic, I should like formally to present to the First Committee draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.24. In doing so we note that the heading used in that document is that associated with resolution 48/75 L, originating in the 1993 session of this Committee. In response to some informal comments made to Canada since our open meeting of 22 October, Canada is requesting the Secretariat to issue a revised document with the following heading:

> "The Conference on Disarmament decision to establish, under item 1 of its agenda entitled 'Cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament' an ad hoc committee to negotiate, on the basis of the report of the Special Coordinator (CD/1299) and the mandate contained therein, a non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices".

That, I think, will be the longest title of any draft resolution in the First Committee.

As such, the heading echoes operative paragraph 1 of the draft resolution, and we sincerely hope this meets the concerns expressed.

While on this part of our comments, I would like to point out that we have drawn the Secretariat's attention to two small corrections which are necessary in A/C.1/53/L.24. One is the addition of the letter "s" to the word "decision" in the third line of the third preambular paragraph. This is just factual consistency with the actual text that was agreed in Geneva. The second is in line two of operative paragraph 1: following the word "agenda" the word "entitled" was omitted in the reproduction of the text. We will be asking for those two textual corrections to be made.

In turning to the draft resolution itself, it is evident to all of us here in this room that it deals with an issue with a long and difficult history. Moreover, complex negotiations lie ahead. It is not the purpose of this draft resolution to review that history, nor to foresee or prejudge those negotiations. The draft resolution is therefore strictly a procedural one anchored firmly in the actions taken in the Conference on Disarmament and in the ad hoc committee itself as set out in its report. Thus, we are of the view that no amendments should be made to this text, since to do so would only serve inevitably to open up substantive issues better reserved for the Conference on Disarmament itself or, as the case may be, better alternatively addressed in more appropriate draft resolutions before this Committee.

That being said, Canada does consider it highly opportune for the First Committee to welcome the steps forward in the Conference on Disarmament and to encourage the continuation of that process in 1999. It is our fervent wish that this consideration on our part will be widely shared in the First Committee and that the draft resolution will be adopted without amendment and without a vote.

Finally, Canada has decided, in response to requests from a very large number of delegations in this room, to open the draft resolution for co-sponsorship and my colleague Mr. Breault is at the back of the room with the sponsorship sheet. We welcome all who wish to sign.

Mr. Dahan (France) (*interpretation from French*): I should like to take the opportunity of the introduction by Canada of the draft resolution on the Ottawa Convention to speak on this item that is of special interest in France. It seems that for three sessions now the First Committee has represented the international community's achievements on the path towards its ambitious objective of eliminating anti-personnel mines. In 1996 it endorsed the endeavour undertaken on 2 October of that same year in Ottawa; in 1997 it took note of the adoption in Oslo of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction; and this year we welcome the entry into force on 1 March next of this Treaty thanks to the deposit on 16 September 1998 of the fortieth instrument of ratification, as well as the offer of the Government of Mozambique to host the first meeting of States parties.

We cannot but be impressed by the rapid succession of these stages: less than a year of preparing the Convention and barely 10 months to obtain 40 ratifications. This unusual diligence shows the shared feeling of the need to respond to an urgent situation. France deposited its instrument of ratification on 23 July 1998, thereby becoming one of the 40 States making possible the Convention's entry into force. It intends to demonstrate its full and complete determination to see the Convention implemented rapidly by co-sponsoring draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.33.

Along with this political and legal process, the international community continues to mobilize in order to meet the urgent situation on the ground through determined action for demining and rehabilitation of victims.

The emphasis now placed on the humanitarian dimension might lead us to believe that with the signing of the Ottawa Convention the task has been accomplished with regard to disarmament. That is not the case at all. The objective of eliminating anti-personnel mines will be achieved only when this norm is made universal. In this regard, one should not be deceived by the impressive number of signatories. Many countries have remained behind because they are not yet in a position, for their own reasons, to join us in our approach. We can hardly ignore them, because together they represent a significant portion of the world's population, and numbered among them are major producers, exporters and users.

It is important to continue to promote vigorously the standard for the complete elimination adopted in Ottawa. This necessary effort, however, cannot in the medium or short term solve the problem of the countries to which I have just referred. Fortunately, other undertakings do exist and even though they do not aim as high as the Ottawa Convention they do attack the problem of mines.

France, which took an active part in the review of, and has ratified, Protocol II of the 1980 Convention, looks forward to its entry into force on 3 December this year. It will join fully in the consensus when the decision is taken on the draft resolution on this subject, which it has co-sponsored.

France would like to take this opportunity to express its regret over the lack of interest shown in this instrument, as demonstrated by the low number of adherences to date, almost two and a half years after its adoption. Some progress has clearly been made in the establishment of minimal measures for the gradual abandonment of the indiscriminate use of the weapons in question, especially with regard to those that have not yet been able to join the Ottawa Convention. In this context, Protocol II deserves the broadest possible support.

It will be recalled that many countries expressed their disappointment when that text was adopted, on 3 May 1996. It was seen as a compromise between security interests and humanitarian concerns and did not attack the root of the problem. While there can be no doubt as to the merit of the texts, it is clear that those reservations were also valid. It is hardly likely that the first annual conference of the States parties to Protocol II and the forthcoming Review Conference of the 1980 Convention, to be held by the year 2001, will address this state of affairs.

In view of the difficulties inherent in this issue, France, with many others, has asked for the Conference on Disarmament to make a contribution to the cause of

eliminating anti-personnel mines. Many countries share this view: on 9 December 1997, by a vote of 147 to none, the General Assembly adopted resolution 52/38 H, which invites the Conference on Disarmament to intensify its efforts in the area of anti-personnel landmines.

This would seem to be the most promising way. The overwhelming majority of that institution in Geneva agreed on the need to begin negotiations with a view to reaching a ban on the transfer of anti-personnel mines. Such an agreement would represent an important stage. By contributing to drying up the markets that provide anti-personnel mines it would greatly serve the cause of the victims of mines. Moreover, this endeavour would not begin from scratch. The Ottawa Convention, especially regarding definitions, would be an indispensable reference for the Conference on Disarmament.

Along with many other countries, we are convinced that the Conference could rapidly reach an agreement. We hope — and we have noted with the greatest interest that the Secretary-General also shares in this hope — that the Conference on Disarmament will decide, when it resumes its work, to re-establish the office of special coordinator on this subject. We hope that the special coordinator will quickly be able to identify the conditions for a consensus so that once a special group has been established the negotiations can begin without delay.

Mr. Al-Hamrani (Saudi Arabia) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Since this is the first time I have spoken this year in the Committee, I should like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chairman during this session. I wish also to commend your political wisdom and skills in steering the deliberations of the Committee towards the achievement of the desired outcome.

(*spoke in English*)

The lessons of history demonstrate that the balance of power can be effectively maintained by the production, possession and capability of using the latest technological innovations in the fields of strategic and tactical weapons and that the absence of the balance of power constitutes a major and insurmountable obstacle that obstructs and impedes the administration of justice, precludes the attainment of a balance of interests, compromises and jeopardizes peace and security, fails to deter aggression and is conducive to instability, chaos and human suffering and deprivation. In general, without the balance of power some States become vulnerable and exposed to international and regional encroachments that could threaten their existence with annihilation.

This theory of the realist school of thought in international relations constitutes the bedrock on the basis of which the existing international and regional strategic doctrines of nuclear deterrence were formulated.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia urges the members of the international community to seize the opportunities that are offered and facilitated by the end of the cold war and the changing international environment in order to enhance regional and international security and stability. According to the teachings of the great religion of Islam, in compliance with the spirit of the Charter of the United Nations, recognizing and stressing the principle of security for all in its foreign policy, and demonstrating its good intentions, the Saudi Government reiterates its previous position and calls for a balance of a different kind which can be achieved under the auspices of the United Nations and is embodied in the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East, and the elimination and dismantling of existing nuclear arsenals and delivery systems. It demands the rapid conclusion by nuclear States of a legally binding international instrument that includes a common approach and a common formula acceptable to all to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons in order to maintain their territorial integrity and political independence. It demands a prohibition on the dumping of radioactive waste in the Middle East region in order to avoid the catastrophic and disastrous effects of a radiological war that would jeopardize the security of all States in the region.

The policy that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia calls for is consistent with the requirements of justice, freedom, individual initiative and human dignity, and emanates from the Saudi conviction that nuclear proliferation constitutes the highest threat and gravest danger to the future of humanity and civilization. On that basis, and instead of threatening mutually assured destruction, the Saudi Government urges all States in the region to adopt the necessary foreign policies that are wise and moderate and will ensure safety and legitimate rights for all as a just and honourable goal, and that will strive to achieve a balance between security and the interests of all in this vital region. This will give credibility to regional confidence-building measures; will contribute to the enhancement of regional and international political stability, peace, security and prosperity; will liberate economic and intellectual resources; and will support peaceful endeavours to enhance

opportunities for investment and regional cooperation. In a nutshell, this positive Saudi policy deserves to occupy the supreme position on the list of international and regional strategic priorities.

Mr. Moon (Republic of Korea): On behalf of the delegation of the Republic of Korea, I would like to make brief comments on two draft resolutions relating to cluster 2, "Other weapons of mass destruction".

My first comment refers to draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.6, on the status of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction. My Government attaches great importance to the early conclusion of the negotiations in the ad hoc group on the protocol aimed at introducing an effective verification regime. In this regard, my delegation supports the main thrust of the draft resolution. However, we find that one important element is missing in the current text. In our view, the broad participation of States parties in the negotiations on the Protocol is essential for achieving the crucial goal of universal adherence to the implementation of the protocol. Without universal adherence, no legal instrument relating to disarmament or weapons of mass destruction can be effective.

Without prejudice to the merits of our point, my delegation decided not to pursue it further in order not to reopen the debate on the relevant paragraph, which we think is a product of delicate compromise. In this connection, however, we understand that the current operative paragraph 3 encompasses the call by the international community on States parties that have not participated in the negotiations on the verification protocol to do so. Once again, my delegation wishes to reiterate the importance of bringing as broad a participation as possible to such negotiations.

Next I would like to turn to the draft resolution entitled "Implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction", document A/C.1/53/L.38/Rev.1.

As one of the original States parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), my country welcomes the progress made in this year's draft resolution that shifts its weight from status to implementation of the Convention. The content of the draft seems to us to contain the measures required by the international community to pursue, under the Convention, disarmament in the area of chemical weapons. In the context of universal adherence to the Convention, my delegation has a concern over the preambular part of the draft resolution, a concern that was appropriately expressed at the informal discussion on it.

The current third preambular paragraph provides that the General Assembly notes with satisfaction the increased number of ratifications of the CWC. While welcoming this fact, my delegation believes that the status of the CWC still falls short of the criteria for universal adherence: even major States believed to possess chemical weapons still decline to join the Convention. We are concerned at the possibility that the third paragraph may give the wrong impression that the international community is satisfied with the current tempo of States acceding to the Convention.

In this context, my delegation is of the view that the cardinal importance of universal adherence needs to be reiterated in the preambular part in conjunction with the third paragraph. This will help avoid any misunderstanding of the third paragraph. We believe that the goal of universal adherence should prevail over other principles enshrined in the Convention itself, for they cannot be upheld without the universal adherence of States to the Convention. We cannot overemphasize the objective of universal adherence in the preambular part regardless of the relevant paragraphs in the operative part of the draft.

While looking forward to the adoption of the draft resolution by consensus, my delegation wishes to put on record its legitimate concerns.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): I have asked to speak so as to offer some comments and some proposals with regard to draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.24, the title of which has now been revised by the representative of Canada, the principal sponsor of the draft resolution, into the longest title in the record of the General Assembly. I welcome this change because at least the new title, although elongated, reflects the factual evolution of this issue in the Conference on Disarmament.

Let me begin by stating that my delegation welcomes the resumption of the negotiations on the fissile materials treaty by the Conference on Disarmament this year, and we supported the establishment of the Ad Hoc Committee during the 1998 session. Our agreement to do so was arrived at by my Government on the basis of certain understandings and expectations. We had opened a constructive dialogue on the South Asian security situation with a major Power, and it was and remains our understanding that the objectives of South Asian security

and non-proliferation will be promoted through a cooperative rather than a coercive approach.

Unfortunately, since the establishment of the Ad Hoc Committee in the Conference on Disarmament, and particularly since the commencement of this Committee's session, we have witnessed not a cooperative approach but a resumption of a coercive approach by the same delegation, *inter alia*, that has sponsored this draft resolution on the fissile materials treaty.

I would like to clarify here the position of my Government: in this climate of coercion, the promotion of which is sought by certain other draft resolutions in the Committee, we will be unable to continue to share in the consensus that was achieved in the Conference on Disarmament on this issue.

My delegation has always heard that the fissile materials treaty must seek to promote both nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. That is not only the position of my delegation but is also the position of the General Assembly as expressed in paragraph 50 of the Final Document. That was also the position of the Canadian delegation in previous years, when it sponsored draft resolutions on the issue of a fissile materials ban. It is certainly the position of the Non-Aligned Movement.

In order to ensure that this commitment of the international community to ensure that the fissile materials treaty promotes both nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, my delegation will be submitting a series of amendments to draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.24. I would like to indicate at this stage the nature and content of those amendments.

Our first amendment seeks to insert a new first preambular paragraph, which would recall paragraph 50 of the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD I), which called for the cessation in the production of fissile material for weapons purposes as part of a comprehensive phased programme leading to the complete elimination of nuclear weapons.

Our second amendment would seek to add two additional preambular paragraphs after the present second preambular paragraph of draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.24. The first of these preambular paragraphs would read as follows:

> "*Notes* the continuing differences among Member States regarding the scope and objectives of the treaty".

That is a statement of fact.

The other preambular paragraph we would insert here would read as follows:

> "*Convinced* that any treaty on fissile material must constitute a disarmament measure and not only a non-proliferation measure".

These words were the words suggested by the Canadian delegation in the Conference on Disarmament in the context of the decision that was adopted with regard to this issue. Unfortunately, these words were not pressed for inclusion in this decision. We would like to see them reflected in the draft resolution in order to ensure that we all abide by the understanding that the treaty will be a disarmament treaty and not merely another non-proliferation measure.

Finally, we seek to add the following words at the end of operative paragraph 3 of draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.24. After the words

> "*Encourages* the Conference on Disarmament to re-establish its ad hoc committee at the beginning of the 1999 session",

we would add the following words:

> "to negotiate a fissile materials treaty which must form an integral step of a process of nuclear disarmament leading to the total elimination of nuclear weapons within a time-bound framework".

These are the words of the Non-Aligned Movement. They are a consensus of the majority of the membership of this Committee, and we hope that they will be reflected in the draft resolution to be adopted by the General Assembly on this important issue. I will hand these amendments to the Secretariat at the end of the meeting.

The meeting rose at 11.40 a.m.